The IDLER

Public Occurrences, Comment, Excursions & Rational Entertainment

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Third Party in '68?

BY SAM DARCY

MOVEMENTS with social aims sooner or later arrive at political involvement. For the past 43 years, that is since the LaFollette movement of 1924, dissatisfaction with the Democratic and Republican parties, particularly in the presidential election years, has been met with attempts at launching third parties. Each such movement failed, in some cases such as the 1948 election, with disastrous consequences for liberals and progressives and the entire nation. In that year, the end result was to pull Henry Wallace's supporters, the progressive and liberal people, out of the Democractic Party leaving the main body of voters under the unchallenged pressure of the Right and ultra-Right. In a few areas where unhappy liberals existed this was also true of Republicans. The third party move abandoned the two old parties to the conservatives, in some instances to reactionaries. A number of unions were split, some were expelled from the AFL-CIO in acrimonious controversy, and labor unionism moved to the Right.

The Southern ultra-Rightists also launched a third party in 1948 but they quickly scurried back after the election --consolidating a Right-Center control, leaving progressives and liberals isolated, disheartened and scattered. It is not beyond reason that had that splintering not occurred, the McCarthyites would have met much greater resistance in the 1950's.

Our American political system is different from that of other countries. It is constructed to favor a two party system. Nominations of candidates are conducted under government, not party branch auspices. The party organizations can and do contest for the nominations, but so can anyone else who can finance his effort. Political parties in England, France and other countries are branch membership organizations who, in their election districts, choose and control their candidates for office and can in some instances recall them; in our country the party committees and locals have no legal control over the candidates, and party platforms are not binding except in a moral sense. The significance of this difference was illustrated in 1934. After years as the candidate of the California Socialist Party, Upton Sinclair moved his followers into the Democratic Party in an organized effort in the primaries to win gubernatorial, state, and local nominations for the liberal Left.

President Roosevelt, not yet "Left of Center," opposed him with the candidacy of William Gibbs McAdoo, yet Sinclair won the primary; and his

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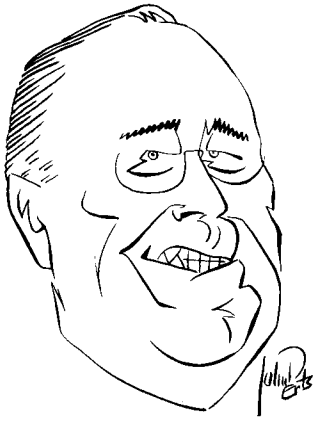
candidates and platform became those of the California Democratic Party.

If our election laws limit the possibility of new parties, they also provide a means of contest within the existing two parties. The inhibitions involved in launching a third party successfully are so enormous that they can be overcome only if they are sought for by overwhelming sections of the population. Such a time may well come, but now, in our circumstances, the country would be best served were the liberal, progressive and Left electorate to continue in close touch with the main body of people who stand in the middle of the political road. To single out some creditable individual--as was done in the recent Chicago city election with the nomination of Dick Gregory--and put him up for office on a third party ticket without overwhelming popular demand would only destroy a valuable public figure and give the appearance of weakness to a good and strong cause. Those whose passion for peace is great sometimes find making realistic judgments difficult.

In the 1968 election it seems clear that the Democrats will nominate Johnson, and the Republicans someone like Romney or Rockerfeller who is of the same view as Lyndon Johnson on the Viet Nam War. Thus the election will be so rigged that the great sentiment of the electorate which is either against the war or cautiously reserved towards it, will be denied an opportunity to to be recorded. The most that third party candidates (Drs. Spock and Martin Luther King are being urged) can accomplish is to record some, not even all, the voters who militantly oppose the war.

Supposing in each state those who oppose the war would follow the tactic of abstaining from voting for the presidency and campaign only for local anti-war candidates thereby having the presidential totals lag behind the ticket, would not the same demonstration be accomplished? It might well turn out to be a much larger and more effective demonstration. There are in a number of states anti-war Senators and House Members already in office who will be threatened by the pro-war advocates. The major attention of the



FDR: SINCLAIR WON THE PRIMARY

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peace movement could be centered on piling up huge majorities for these men. A third party would weaken their chances.

In election districts where pro-war Congressmen and Senators are in office, and it is reasonably possible to defeat them, a concentrated effort might be made to achieve that, through support of those opponents who would declare themselves against the war or, if necessary, by nominating people of major political calibre who would agree to make the fight.

Not all candidates in the two parties have a fixed position on the peace question. A third party movement would abandon them--yet they may be

influenced for the good. In some areas there may be no peace candidate available. But, then, if there were a third party there would also be many areas without peace candidates. Circumstances are so varied in each election district that where nominees already selected offer no worthy alternative, peace, civil rights and anti-poverty people will have to figure out how to make their pressure felt, basing themselves on local conditions. The guiding policy should be to prevent the separation of anti-war and civil rights leaders from the mainstream of the American electorate. It would keep the healthiest, most vigorous thinking citizens of the country with the main body of voters. Such a tactic holds promise for broadening the opposition to the war instead of isolating it as would surely be the case if a third party movement were at this time launched on the Viet Nam issue.

It is conceivable that in some states, California and Oregon for example, the anti-war forces within the major parties might be able to contest the elections to the electoral college. It should only be attempted if it holds some promise of success or at least a good showing. Should a single state come up with a winning anti-war slate to the electoral college, and the elections result in a close contest between the major candidates, their leverage would be so great that an historic score for peace might be the outcome in dealing for these balance of power votes. A third party movement would destroy this possibility.

The years 1924, 1932 and 1948 all showed great growth of progressive and liberal sentiment in the country. In 1924 and 1948 it climaxed in third party movements which aborted the growing sentiment, quickly disintegrated it and was followed by periods of reaction in our country. In 1932, when no third party was created, there began the working together of the Center and Left, in parallel lines or in united effort, for important progress.

We should think about all this very carefully in contemplating 1968.

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Expo's Overstocked Warehouse

AT Montreal this year the medium almost destroyed the message. There, at Expo '67, lying atop two islands set like gargantuan pontoons in the St. Lawrence River, a massive monument has been erected--ostensibly to Man and His World. It is, in truth, more a spectacular overstocked warehouse of the graphic arts: two-story high photographs in need of captions, blinding spears of light in search of something to illuminate; background music with nothing to accompany; six-screen movies without meaning; oscillating, vibrating, rotating, bouncing, hydraulic machines with no work to do. The huge, throbbing arrows point the way, but at the end of the corridor, the space is void.

The graphic artists, the audio-visual experts, and the public relations specialists formed a junta which captured the 1967 World Exposition, issuing as its first edict the rule that any statement becomes a truth when printed with three dots after it upon a wall or when uttered in sonorous tones through a ceiling speaker. A fantasyland has been created which, in small doses, delights the senses, but which rarely touches that part of man that makes him stand alone in his world: his mind.

To be sure, there are beneath the globes containing hidden slide projectors and the lights that suddenly spark in darkened rooms the considerable remains of traditional world's fair material: the museum exhibits that recount the variety of men's lives, the crafts, the arts, the humors and pleasures of people who seldom meet.

The Russians, with their dogged belief in man's ability to absorb the indigestible, offer complex models of industrial projects, the latest in Soviet dental equipment, and the sort of machines one drifts by without reading the label attached to them.

The Americans, with unexpected whimsey, present a venerable DeSoto taxicab, some typical neon signs and a jungle gym ridden by innumerable Raggedy Ann dolls. At one end of the fair grounds an eskimo rubs a soapstone seal to a foggy gloss, while, a healthy minirail ride away, an African weaver warps and woofs his way through another day on public view.

These are some of the many small surprises, curiosities and satisfactions to be discovered at this fair. But they are obscured by the pontifical hyperbole of the "theme pavilions" --Man the Creator, Man the Producer, Man the Explorer--and their modesty and honesty mock the pretension of Expo's official pronouncement of its aim: "to provide an explanation of the world we live in to each and everyone of its visitors, so that they may realize that we are all

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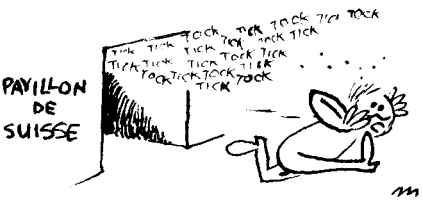
jointly and severally answerable for and to each other, and that what divides men is infinitely less important than that which links them together."

Inundated by claims of man's ability to live together, one appreciated all the more the plainly attractive girl yodelling in the Swiss restaurant; the slightly self-conscious Quebecan folk dancers; the blunt reminder by the Canadian Indians in their exhibit that they had shown the white man through their woods to food and water and had, in return, lost their land and their civilization; and the magnificent Czech Pavilion with its shimmering Bohemian glass and fine white lace dresses set on black dummies against a black wall.

These were the moments that carried one through the hours of plastic tedium which characterized many of the exhibits. I lost count of the photographs of the fiery interiors of steel mills where "ore is poured to build the sinews of a mighty industrial nation." No movie at the fair seemed complete without at least one discotheque sequence. I wearied of printed and spoken homilies such as "Are we ready for a totally automated civilization? The decision is yours. . . " and of endless maps with such fascinating purposes as the identification of the exact location of the different types of wood of Burma. The Swiss, of course, made their own particular contribution to the comprehensive dullness of much of the fair by reminding us, with several hundred examples, that they make watches.

Above all there were lines. Lines to get into pavilions. Lines to get into restrooms and restaurants. Lines to get into lines. These sinuous streams formed a depressing living pavilion of "Man the Patient." Primitive man made the tragedy of his environment tolerable with myths; modern man, with his



commercial-interrupted TV, his commutor congestion and his tiresome stands outside pavilions, has made the boredom of his environment tolerable with patience. "He will be saved who believes" has been altered to "He will be saved who waits."

Admittedly, in a few instances--such as the Czech Pavilion and the telephone company building (which featured a Canadian travelogue projected on a 360° screen which produced the startling realistic effect of the viewer feeling as if in the middle of the scene photographed)--the patience was probably justified.

But a more typical case was Labyrinth, a constant attraction point at Expo. The official guide tells us:

"Labyrinth. . . is a contemporary adaptation of the Minotaur legend of ancient Greece.

"The Minotaur was a monster, half bull and half man, living in a labyrinth. Each year tribute was exacted of Athenian maidens and youths whom the Minotaur devoured. Then the hero Theseus slew the Minotaur.

"Relating this idea to the Theme of Expo--Man and his World--the film makers drew an analogy. As Theseus the hero advanced through the mysterious passageways of the Labyrinth, so Man throughout time has been exploring the planet earth and his environment--from caveman to spaceman.

"Labyrinth is intended to bring the viewer intinmate insight into the fundamental significance of Man and his World.

"If Theseus in this immensely ex-

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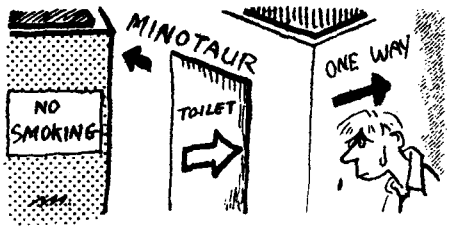

panded legend is Man, what is the Minotaur? To visit Labyrinth is to find the answer to that question. "

With such a prospectus, it is not hard to understand the long lines around Labyrinth. Once inside the pre-stressed structure, however, "intimate insight" never materialized.

I thought we might be approaching it as we sat in a cul de sac waiting for the first of two films. There on the wall was a sign:

"In the labyrinth of legend, the hero, after many adventures, found his way to the beast and destroyed it and returned triumphant to the world. "

I felt a momentary surge of insight and I, man, prepared to lunge after the beast, whoever he was. I cased the three doors at my end of the room. One was marked "No Admittance. " The second read: "No Smoking. " The third: "Toilets. "

I investigated the far end of the room. The exit there was guarded only by a young girl Expo guide. A quick rush and I could push on in my search for the monster. But as I waited for something to distract her, the door marked "No Admittance" suddenly opened and I, along with all the other would-be Theseuses, marched quietly into the first theater.

The films were good. The novelty of standing high in a narrow multi-tiered chamber watching a movie projected on both wall and floor is undeniably exciting. And there are a mass of visual tricks one can perform using five screens instead of one. But reduce the content to a single standard size screen and it is unlikely that the films would attract more than momentary interest. The problem existed throughout Expo: the packaging was always three steps ahead of the packaged.

Safely outside, viewing again the lengthy ribbon of potential Minotaur killers, it occurred to me that by frantically trying to get through doors, one missed the real triumph of Expo. Better than any glass enclosed, tritely captioned exhibit was the magnificent display of the fairground itself. There was in the architecture and design of Expo an exhuberance and imagination lacking in that which the architecture enclosed. America's huge geodesic dome seemed so light and round that it appeared ready at the slightest puff of wind to bounce contentedly across the fairground and land with a spectacular splash in the St. Lawrence. The Venezualan building consisted of brightly colored blocks of pop art intensity. The clean, white lines of the Scandanavian Pavilion contrasted sharply with Thailand's exhibit, housed in a replica of an 18th century Buddhist shrine. Even the ponderous Soviets managed to soar a bit with their structure.

Expo's planners capitalized upon the proximity of water in their scheme. A network of canals cut across the grounds. Gondolas, motorboats and hovercraft (man's latest contribution to the decible level of his environment) carried visitors about. And in the background huge cargo ships glided down the narrow channel of the St. Lawrence Seaway, off to connect the physical world as the pedicabs and metro trains joined the make-believe globe of the fair.

In striking exception to the tedious delays elsewhere at the fair, the public transportation system moved expeditiously and reliably. Free frequent bus ser-

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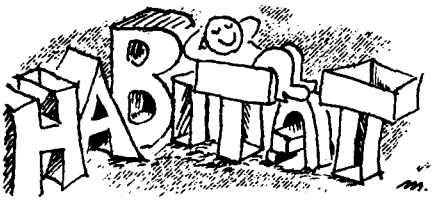
vice was provided from a parking lot holding over 12,000 cars. You got into and out of the lot easily. The bus stops were spaced so that only a short walk was required from your car. And, best of all, you could actually find your car upon return. This was achieved by the simple technique of identifying the various sections of the lot by large posters of animals. It was both easy and pleasurable to be able to recall at the end of a long day that your vehicle was not somewhere out there, but at Hippo-8 or Seal-13.

Inside the fairgrounds, buses and a fast, clean elevated system moved one from point to point. There were an average of 300,000 persons on the fairgrounds every day I was there, but even at the closing rush hour, it was only necessary to wait a short time for a train.

Unfortunately, the housing at Expo was not handled as well. My wife and I, like thousands of other tourists, were herded into prefab barrack-like structures at $22 a night and up. Our "motel" was far out East Sherbrooke St. at



a location which, as close as I could tell, was just across the border from Nova Scotia. Our room was cramped, poorly ventilated and noisy. Driving back to it from Expo required readjustment. We had been tremendously taken by Habitat '67, the large irregular pyramidal apartment building constructed out of prefab concrete modules. There the boxes had been shuffled, stacked, and glued together with variety. Instead of the death mask of the familiar high-rise apartment, the facade was filled with life, smiling, grimacing, frowning, but never still.

Yet somewhere out East Sherbrooke St. the message was lost. And they built the Americana Motel. Just for the fair? Yes. But men not only live by great dreams; they die through little inattentions.

Every few years we gather together for a giant demonstration of man's faith in himself. Man rises above these fairs like a phantasmagora seen mounting from the shore. We watch--amazed, thrilled, enthralled. And few notice that they're shoving each other for a look at the brotherhood exhibit. Or that they're standing in line two hours to hear man's individualism praised.

--(s. s.)

Cynic in Love

When dissatisfied, I take another.
When I cannot stand myself,
I fall in love, and when
I fall in love, I mingle two
dissatisfactions.

--Brian Swann

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The Corner Aphorist

By Sam A. Darcy

■ LBJ, HUBERT HORATIO, and Congress all say that we can have both butter and guns. Their budget shows how--very little butter, very many guns.

Several billion dollars have been added to the war budget to pay for new escalation and 45,000 more men. But the House Ways and Means Committee --"to cut non-defense spending"--is reducing the appropriation for aid to dependent American children as "part of reducing the welfare load." Can those wicked old men sleep at night--knowing that children got to bed crying because of hunger pains, so the government can make war?

■ FROM THE Johnson-Ford-Rusk-Dirksen speeches we gain the comfort of knowing that all our follies are being committed in the name of loyalty to our commitment. Must be loyalty to the commitment of follies, since no other is in evidence.

■ IN THE PLUSH appointments of legislative halls, judicial chambers, and comfortable executive offices, the rioters of August were denounced as "looters." Looting is abhorrent. It degenerates political protest to the level of criminality. Though only a small percentage of the protesting people looted, it was sufficient for the press and courts to smear the rest.

But who are the real criminals? The legislators and government bureaucrats all the year before turned a deaf ear to the peaceful pleas of the hungry and needy, while they busied themselves with loud speeches for more war.

"Order" is restored but the problem is not solved. Police and courts cannot solve it. The ignored appeals of July may gring riots in August and, as many fallen governments testify, greater violence come winter.

■ COUSIN BARNEGAT was in with this observation:

> It has become true that if a man deliberately causes the death of another, he is a criminal. If he deliberately causes the death of thousands, he is a statesman.

■ IF YOU WONDER how historians will write about our times you might consider Ambrose Bierce's definition:

> History is an account, mostly false, of events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves and soldiers mostly foolish victims.

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The McDowell Papers

By Charles McDowell Jr.

WASHINGTON

THE thing to remember about the turtles is to turn off their air-bubble machine when you feed them and to turn on their light if they look cold.

The thing to remember about the dog is to feed it half a portion of canned food and half a portion of dry food once a day and half a pill twice a day.

The thing to remember about the man from the cleaner's is that he comes on Thursday, or maybe Wednesday, but he is on vacation and his substitute will not come in if the dog is in the front hall.

The thing to remember about the cat is not to let it eat the turtles.

Actually that is only a small sample of what a man has to remember when his wife and children have gone away and left him in charge of the house for several days.

I refused to write down any of their instructions. I resented their condescension. The way they kept explaining everything five times, you would have thought they were talking to some kind of nincompoop.

We all drove from Washington to Richmond together, and it was instructions all the way. In Richmond, we put the 12-year-old girl on a bus to camp, and her parting words were about the cat and the turtles. She feels close to the cat, not the turtles, and would hold me responsible if the cat's reputation were tarnished by any accident to the turtles.

The 10-year-old boy, the 6-year-old girl and their mother went off to Aunt Gertrude's farm. They departed in a cloud of last-minute injunctions about animals, plants, the yard, the milkman, the trash men, the checking account, the socks in the dryer, what I was supposed to eat, and how I was to take advantage of the deserted house to relax.

The trip back home was relaxing, but these past few days have been as hectic and tense as any I remember. All the instructions have run together in my mind, and I have had to learn a good many things by trial and error. The dog prefers cat food and the cat prefers dog food. The cat also likes pizza and ate quite a lot of mine when I suddenly remembered to give the dog half a pill and had to wrestle the dog all over the utility room.

Although the sickly azaleas needed sprinkling, all right, I should have been more careful where I tied the dog in the yard. A well-watered dog, already moping about an unwanted pill, is not a happy animal.

Nor are two turtles who cannot catch up with their food because it is caught in a sort of whirlpool created by the action of the air-bubble machine in their tank. Somehow I had turned on the light on a bracket over the tank instead of turning off the air-bubble machine.

While I was trying to figure out what was wrong, I heard the dog howling in the sprinkler. While I was outside res-

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cuing the dog, the cat got into the room with the turtles. I got back just in time to hear the cat yelp and see it rush wildly out of the room. The turtles looked smug.

I finally deduced the cat had received an electric shock when its tail touched the light while it was dipping a paw into the tank. The way I deduced it was to hold one hand on the light while reaching into the tank to aim the smaller turtle at a piece of food.

It was a sharp shock, but it did serve to remind me that I was burning the other half of the pizza in the oven.

That first evening may have been the worst of it. Now I am beginning to get the feel of the situation. The cat has recovered not only from the electric shock but from eating half of a dog pill that I had left somewhere.

Two deliveries of milk have been brought in from the handy little box on the front porch. The socks in the dryer have now been through the washer, on the theory that wet socks might stretch back to their original size after a double-drying. Either the trash men or the cleaner's man will come tomorrow, but I shall be ready for both, with the shirts in the hall, the trash in the cans, the dog in the utility room, and the socks on stretchers made out of coat hangers and hung high above the dog. The dog eats socks.

I hope it is the cleaner's man who comes. I plan to be late getting to work because I want to talk with him. It seems to me that I have heard him talk with some of the children about turtles, and maybe he can tell me whether the light and the air-bubble machine are both supposed to stay on all night. The air-bubble machine makes a whining noise, and I think that is what is ruining the television reception for me and the cat.

(Richmond Times-Dispatch)

MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND WAR

First of all, to ward off accusation of any bias, I repeat Evtushenko's words: There's not a drop of Jewish blood in me.

Yet I definitely disagree with your comments in the last issue about "the seizure by the Zionists of the Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian real estate" first in 1949, then in 1956, and now in June, 1967.

If we review the history of "seizures" in the Middle East, we find that the Jordanians, the Syrians, the Egyptians, and other Arabs, seized the Turkish real estate after World War I. Further back the Turks seized real estate from the Greeks and the Romans who, earlier, had seized plenty of real estate from others, including the Jews. Who is, then, the legal owner of the Middle East real estate?

You might say that those seizures in the past happened before we all became goody-goody and the United Nations began to censure aggressors. Well, now, what about the goody-goody veto-bearing Russians who, after World War II, grabbed from Finland a hundred per

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cent Finn poulated area around Viborg (Viipuri)? What about the same Russians' annexing to the Russian part of the Soviet Union (R. S. F. S. R.) an old Prussian city of Koenigsberg and giving it a preposterous Russian name of Kaliningrad? What about the annexation of the Japanese Kurile Islands? What about the occupation of Hungary by the Soviet troops? Any more? Plenty?

Yes, the plight of the Arab refugees is horrible. Yet, a bit less horrible than the plight of those trying to escape from behind the Iron Curtain. The Arab refugees are not blown by land mines or shot by border guards or blackmailed with threats at the safety of their relatives. In fact TV has been showing the Arab refugees fed by the Israeli. Now, one cannot help wondering if we would have ever seen the Israeli refugees fed by the Arabs had the other side become victorious. Judging by the Arab promises in the early part of June we probably would have seen the Israeli's flesh and bones fed to the Arab dogs. And one more thought about the Arab refugees: we hear all the time about the Arab unity. If it really exists one would expect some help to the refugees to come from their own gold-choked brethren from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. But it is we of the American and European West who are expected to render all the help to the Arab refugees and then be castigated for it.

Yes, Sam, you may publish this letter. It might help some of your readers to realize that sentimentality breeds misconceptions, misconceptions breed misunderstandings and misunderstandings ultimately breed wars.

John Perts
Suffolk, Va.

AT LEAST ALIVE

I was very much taken by the most recent Idler (Summer 1967). However, I was very much taken aback when I read the "Corner Aphorist" article on the Middle East War.

Mr. Darcy stated ". . . a residue of ineradicable bitterness in the hearts of 80 million Arab neighbors towards the two million Israelis. And. . . no friends for them in Pakistan, India, North Africa and all the surrounding lands. . . spells a far more insecure future (for Israel) than the blockade of the Strait of Tiran or some border incidents. " This is not true!

Nothing could have been more insecure for Israel than the situation which existed just prior to the outbreak of the war. "Some border incidents" meant the constant shelling of kibbutzis and the mining of roads (U Thant and UNTSO expressed their deep concern).

"Blockade of the Strait of Tiran" meant that all of Israel's considerable trade with Africa and the East was cut off, that its plan for development of

HUGH HAYNIE ...

"It's Really Very Simple--This Little Piggy Goes to Vietnam and This Big Piggy Stays Home. "

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the Negev was checked, that the whole economy of the nation was ruined. These things in themselves were intolerable.

What Mr. Darcy does not mention is the massing of troops on the Egyptian, Jordan, and Syrian borders of Israel, and the accompanying barrage of threats of annihilation.

It is like a man being held up by six thugs who, after taking his wallet, pull out their knives and threaten to kill him. The man must win or die.

What good came of it? Israel has undoubtedly provoked the "ineradicable bitterness" of the Arab world, but at least she is alive.

L. M.
Philadelphia, Pa.

(The Idler welcomes correspondence from its readers. Please indicate that your letter is intended for publication.)

Flotsam & Jetsam

☐ IF WE CAN'T deal with the problems of the cities any better than we talk about them, we're in real trouble. Take Carl Rowen, columnist, on August 2: "The incendiary words of SNCC leader H. Rap Brown, crackling from the television screens of America like verbal Molotov cocktails, cannot help but water the weeds of hatred and vengence in the white community." ☐ OR GOV. HUGHES at the height of the Newark riot: "The worst thing that could happen here would be to create conflict between black and white." ☐ OR LBJ at the height of the Detroit riot: "Basically, so far as I am concerned, I do not have knowledge as to the whys, wherefores and causes." ☐ PERHAPS the best example of the confusion into which the current trouble has thrown comfortable America was an AP report which stated that "Stokely Carmichael . . . made threats against President Johnson, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and other high U. S. officials." Well, it's understandable. It's hard to tell who your leader is these days.

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